

WASHINGTON - U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall joined **U.S. Representative Harry Teague** today to announce that the Mescalero Apache Tribe will receive **\$2.5 million** through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for a Woody Biomass Energy Development project. The project will develop a wood pellet production plant and a 6 mega-watt power plant in conjunction with the **Mescalero Apache Tribe's** sawmill.

The funding will help protect the Lincoln National Forest, which is one of the most threatened in the U.S., by utilizing the woody biomass that poses a fire risk in the forest as a renewable energy resource.

"Converting small diameter trees to energy makes a lot of sense. It not only helps us continue our shift toward renewable energy, it also allows us to responsibly thin forested communities," said **Bingaman**, who chairs the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. "But in this case, we're also helping create and support jobs in New Mexico. All of this adds up to a great investment in our state."

"Today's announcement shows that the Recovery Act is continuing to fund sustainable economic projects in New Mexico that create jobs in the near term and provide long-term economic benefits," said **Udall**. "This investment will give both the tribe and the surrounding rural community the tools they need to create renewable energy, prevent forest fires, and promote economic development."

"This program is a perfect of example of how the Recovery Act benefits New Mexico's small communities in many ways," said **Teague**. "The \$2.5 million we're providing will be used to reduce fire danger, create jobs, and create a marketable energy product. Sounds like win - win - win to me."